

## Furman Magazine

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Volume 56  
Issue 1 *Spring 2013*

Article 14

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4-1-2013

# Students bring TED(x) formula to Furman

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### Recommended Citation

Stewart, Jim (2013) "Students bring TED(x) formula to Furman," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 56 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.  
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol56/iss1/14>

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*TEDxFurmanU speakers addressed topics in design thinking and social enterprise; Ben Riddle '16 and political science professor Brent Nelsen were emcees; the 100 participants, including students, faculty and staff, were chosen through a competitive application process; Katie Guptill '13 offered a running artistic commentary on each presentation.*

## Students bring TED(x) formula to Furman

TECHNOLOGY. ENTERTAINMENT. DESIGN. Ideas worth spreading.

That's what TED, a nonprofit organization known for its innovative conferences, stimulating dialogue and inspirational 18-minute YouTube videos, has been about for the last 25 years: promoting ideas that can change the world.

It's also the source of several spin-offs, among them TEDx, which allows independent groups to use the TED name and approach to sponsor their own programs. Same format, smaller scale.

Which is where Furman comes in — and, more precisely, Furman students.

This year the Furman Creative Collaborative, consisting almost exclusively of freshmen and sophomores, received permission to bring a TEDx program to campus. The students chose "Redesigning Education" as their theme and attracted 10 high-energy thinkers to speak.

TEDxFurmanU was held in Younts Conference Center March 15 before about 100 students, faculty and staff, all chosen to participate through a competitive application process. AJ Calhoun '15, head of the FCC, called the event a "catalytic moment" for the university.

Whether or not he was right, the speakers, who included Danny Stillion '89, an associate partner with IDEO, an international design and consulting firm, did offer a wide range of possibilities for education in the 21st century. A few examples: Christian Long of Cannon Design in Columbus, Ohio, advocated "human-centered design thinking," which focuses on reinventing classroom space to spur collaborative work. Alan Webb of Washington, D.C., a founding member of the Open Master's Program, discussed how education is primarily about creating relationships — and how to reimagine those relationships in a technology-driven world.

Cynthia Lawson with The New School at Parsons in New York City suggested pushing educational boundaries beyond the classroom and into the world, where students learn from hands-on fieldwork and teachers serve as facilitators to help them develop their resourcefulness and observational skills. DeAndrea Nichols, founder of CatalystsbyDesign in St. Louis, addressed the needs of underserved youth and promoted empathy-based learning models designed to establish sustainable connections and eliminate the "failure mindset."

In all, the evening proved to be a fast-paced, five-hour package of ideas, thoughts, dreams and possibilities. How can you top that? Furman will try on March 22, 2014, with "Stories: The Common Thread of Our Humanity." The FCC and company are already on the prowl for storytellers. Learn more at [tedxfurmanu.com](http://tedxfurmanu.com).

— JIM STEWART

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